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ABSTRACT

Based on Robert E. Sherwood's Pulitzer Prize winning play, this filmstrip study guide examines Lincoln's formative years against the backdrop of an emerging frontier America. Carl Sandburg's epic three-volume biography of Lincoln accompanies the complete program. The three filmstrips--"Young Abe Lincoln," "A House Divided," and "Lincoln and Liberty" --deal with episodes and issues concerning Lincoln's early life and are to be used with selected readings in volume one, "The Prairie Years," of the Sandburg biography. Volumes two and three of the biography may be used for independent research and study of Lincoln's presidency and the war years. Information provided in the guide for each filmstrip includes a synopsis, activities to use with students before viewing the filmstrip, a list of vocabulary terms, and themes to explore. Unit activities include discussion topics, ideas for creative and expository writing, topics for further investigation, and ways of comparing the book and filmstrip. The guide concludes with a brief bibliography of additional literature about Lincoln. (RM)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

# ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS

*TEACHING OBJECTIVES*

1. To trace the ideals and achievements of young Abe Lincoln in his formative years in New Salem and Springfield, Illinois.
2. To examine the conflicting forces of nationalism and sectionalism in 19th century American life.
3. To study the issues and personalities affecting the young nation and its movement toward civil war.
4. To provide special opportunities for reading by correlating Lincoln's early life with Robert E. Sherwood's *Pulitzer Prize* winning play and Carl Sandburg's three-part biography.

*A WORD ABOUT THE FILMSTRIP PROGRAM*

This program is adapted from the original motion picture and traces the ideals and experiences of young Abe Lincoln from his years in New Salem and Springfield to his election as president. Key figures in Lincoln's early life and times come ringingly to life, including Stephen A. Douglas, John Brown, Elijah Lovejoy and Mary Todd. Based on Robert E. Sherwood's *Pulitzer Prize* winning play, this unit examines Lincoln's formative years against the backdrop of an emerging frontier America.

Carl Sandburg's epic three-volume biography of Lincoln accompanies this filmstrip program. Episodes and issues concerning Lincoln's early life are correlated in the Study Guide with selected readings in volume one, *The Prairie Years*. Volumes two and three may be used for independent research and study of Lincoln's presidency and the war years. **Given the size of the three-volume set, the books will be shipped separately upon purchase of the filmstrip program.**

*ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS*
**A SOUND FILMSTRIP PROGRAM**


Teaching Objectives . . . . . 2
Commentary by the Program Advisor . . . . . 3
Filmstrip 1 – Young Abe Lincoln. . . . . 4-5
Filmstrip 2 – A House Divided . . . . . 6-7
Filmstrip 3 – Lincoln and Liberty . . . . . 8-9
Unit Activities . . . . . 10-11
Bibliography. . . . . 11



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## *About ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS*

The 1930s despression crisis struck at the cords that traditionally bound the American people as a nation. Economic adversity pitted region against region, workers against farmers, or rich against poor as each group sought to survive the gravest national peril since the Civil War. Nor did danger stop at America's borders. The rise of fascism in Europe and Japanese militarism in Asia threatened to plunge the industrial nations into another world war.

In response to those perils, intellectuals and artists became hopeful that their work might serve to merge the best of traditional American values into a new social order capable of withstanding the current crisis. Their work would furnish Americans with a common body of knowledge and symbols that would reduce the barriers of region, social class, cultural background, and economic status that made most Americans strangers to one another. Whether in the paintings of a regionalist artist like Thomas Hart Benton, the writing of novelist John Steinbeck, or the philanthropic effort of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to reconstruct the colonial past at Williamsburg, many creative Americans sought to remind Americans of their common national heritage.

It is no surprise then that Abraham Lincoln emerged as the great symbol of national union. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Robert Sherwood explored Lincoln's pre-presidential years in Illinois to strike those themes that made Lincoln a regenerative image for the depression generation. Most of those themes are still familiar today. Lincoln embodied the great American dream of transcending humble social origins to reach the pinnacle of success. He was blessed with all the pioneer virtues – grit, honesty, resourcefulness, self-reliance, homespun wisdom, humility, and faith. His roots ran deep in a regional culture along the Ohio River valley that remains today the core of "middle America." In addition to being the nation's industrial and agricultural heartland, it has generated many of the candidates for high national office.

In evoking Lincoln as a national symbol, Sherwood had to take certain liberties in order to establish his central themes. Above all, Sherwood had to confront the reality that Lincoln labored most of his adult life as a politician in a nation that sees politics as a low and dirty business. What was worse, Lincoln excelled at this tawdry calling. He could bargain with the best and trim the cut of his political coat to suit the current fashion. Sherwood, therefore, brought the inner Lincoln to the surface – the prescient soul that seemed to sense that his personal future was intertwined with the impending national tragedy. The words and deeds of the Founding Fathers which furnished many politicians with handy slogans and platitudes had for Lincoln the ring of divine truth. From his profound faith in America and its heritage, Sherwood's Lincoln drew the strength and passionate resolve to lead the fight to preserve the national union. It is no wonder, then, that 1930s Americans could find so much hope in Lincoln's image.

In the end Sherwood's Abe Lincoln stands a bit bigger than life. That is all the more understandable when we recall that it was Lincoln whose force of will provided the resolve for his generation to preserve the bonds that the 1930s crisis once again threatened to sever. If ever Americans needed heroes and heroines to unite them it was during the Great Depression.

**Dr. Mark Lytle**
*Chairman, American Studies Program*
*Bard College*

# ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS

## FILMSTRIP 1 – YOUNG ABE LINCOLN

*Parallels Chapters 1-3 in "The Prairie Years"*

***SYNOPSIS:***

Young "bookish" Abe Lincoln leaves his home in Kentucky to deliver a boatload of pigs to the growing community in New Orleans. When the boat overturns and the pigs run ashore at New Salem, Abe meets Ann Rutledge and resolves to settle in the frontier community. In New Salem Abe is given the job of Clerk of the local election board. Later he takes over the general store and continues his schooling with Mentor Graham, the local teacher. Eventually Abe is elected as postmaster of New Salem. He learns that Ann has been rejected by a suitor who returned to the east. Abe confesses his love for Ann and agrees to wait until she determines her feelings for him. Members of the Whig party persuade Abe to run for the State Legislature and celebrate his election with a square dance. Ann attends the dance, becomes ill and is taken home. Her illness grows worse, and Abe visits her on her deathbed. When Ann mistakes him for the young man she still loves, Abe is heartbroken. After her death he leaves for Springfield to fulfill his duty.

***BEFORE VIEWING:***

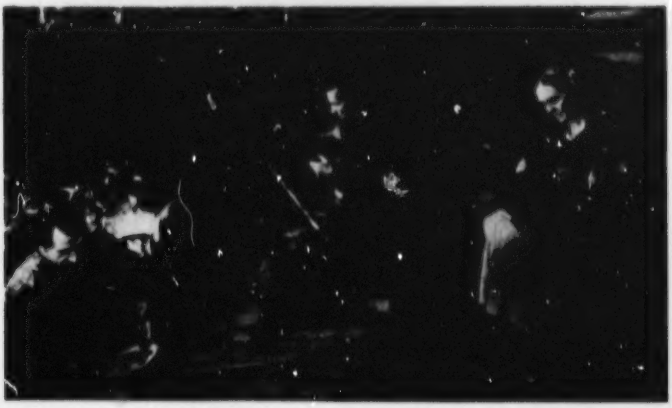
1. Lincoln has long been considered the man of the American frontier. What characteristics do you associate with 19th century frontier life and frontier settlers? Why has Lincoln become an American folk hero? Which of his personality traits are particularly appealing to Americans?
2. The following advice was given by Lincoln to a young law student: "Get the books, and read and study them till you understand them in their principal features; and that is the main thing . . . Your own resolution to succeed, is more important than any other one thing." (Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln, The Prairie Years*, pp. 85-86.)

   List several adjectives that might describe Lincoln, based on this quotation. Discuss his accomplishments and personality in relation to this quote.

***VOCABULARY:***

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| placidly | inclination | pretentious |
| tirade | dubiously | snigger |
| tabulate | pompous | grimace |
| | gerrymander | |

## FILMSTRIP 1 – YOUNG ABE LINCOLN



*"Even if it stopped rainin' you wouldn't notice it seein' as how you're everlastingly got your nose stuck in some book."*

***EXPLORING THEMES:***

1. Describe Lincoln as he is portrayed in the first filmstrip. How does this portrait compare with Lincoln's image as a folk hero? Does the filmstrip provide new insights into Lincoln's character? Explain.
2. Foreshadowing is a common device used in Filmstrip 1. Cite several incidents from the filmstrip which indicate the course of future events.
3. What appears to be the attitude of the local townspeople toward politicians and politics? Does Lincoln agree with their attitudes? Explain. Have these attitudes changed in modern times? Explain.
4. Mentor Graham uses a pun in his lesson with Lincoln. What is the pun and what is its purpose in the story?
5. Why is Lincoln ambivalent about joining the militia to fight in the Black Hawk Wars? What convinces him to join? Why were the native Americans and the white settlers in conflict?
6. In the original Robert Sherwood play, Mentor Graham asks Lincoln to read Daniel Webster's speech from the Webster-Hayne Debate in 1830. The debate concerns a state's right to nullify federal laws. Lincoln recites, "Liberty and union, now and forever, one and inseparable." Why did Sherwood use that particular speech in that play?
7. How do the people in New Salem react to Lincoln? How do you explain their reaction?
8. When Lincoln visits Ann Rutledge on her death bed, whom does she think he is? What effect does this have on him? How might his love for Ann Rutledge affect his later life? Why do you think Ann Rutledge plays an important part in this story?
9. Why does the Whig party want Lincoln as its candidate for the State Legislature?

# ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS

## FILMSTRIP 2 – A HOUSE DIVIDED

*Parallels Chapters 7-8 in "The Prairie Years"*

*SYNOPSIS:*

Stephen Douglas, a prominent lawyer, and Ninian Edwards, a wealthy Whig politician, visit Abe in his office. They discuss the murder of the famous Abolitionist, Elijah Lovejoy. Douglas and Edwards consider Lovejoy an extremist. Although Lincoln admired Lovejoy, he is reluctant to take sides on the slavery issue and hopes to remain neutral in order to avoid bloodshed. Mary Todd, Ninian's sister-in-law, prefers Abe's simple "backwoods" demeanor to Stephen Douglas' sophisticated manner. She resolves to marry the young lawyer and help him fulfill his destiny. Lincoln continues his public career with another minor post as an Elector in the presidential election of William Henry Harrison. Again Lincoln is pressed to take a stand on the slavery issue by his friends, Billy Herndon and Joshua Speed, and again he declines. He proposes to Mary Todd, although he is disturbed by her ambitions for him. Later Abe breaks the engagement. He travels through the state and visits New Salem where he makes peace with the ghosts of his past. When he returns, Abe is ready to marry Mary Todd.

*BEFORE VIEWING:*

1. The following statements have been made about Lincoln:

   "Lincoln doesn't show at first all that is in him." (Sandburg, p. 190)

   "You can never tell what Lincoln is going to do till he does it." (Sandburg, p. 190-191)

   "While guilty of no duplicity, he could hide his thoughts and intentions more efficiently than any man with a historical record." (Sandburg, p. 191)

   What does each speaker mean? Are the character assessments flattering? Explain. Are these qualities important for a successful statesman? Explain.

2. Why do you think Lincoln would be popular with Illinois voters of his day? Do you think he would be popular in the age of television and mass media? Why?

3. Filmstrip two begins with a reference to the historical figure, Elijah Lovejoy. Who was he and why is he important to this story?

*VOCABULARY:*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| fanaticism | incendiary | conception |
| eloquent | oppression | perseverance |
| rendered | grapple | mortification |
| firebrand | tract | infernal |

## FILMSTRIP 2 – A HOUSE DIVIDED

*"Funny – you know, I never could kill a deer after that."*

*EXPLORING THEMES:*

1. The filmstrip opens with the inscription, "Proclaim liberty throughout the land, to all the inhabitants thereof," superimposed over the liberty bell. Why is this an appropriate introduction?
2. Does the exchange between Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln after the murder of Elijah Lovejoy give a clear picture of Lincoln's attitude toward slavery? Explain.
3. What do we learn about Mary Todd in the party scene where she talks with both Lincoln and Douglas? Who really controls this social situation? How? Why does the verbal "battle" occur?
4. What does Lincoln see as the difference between his position and Billy Herndon's concerning slavery? What two arguments does Lincoln use to defend his position?
5. Explain what Lincoln means when he says, "I am opposed to slavery. But I'm even more opposed to getting myself into trouble." How does Lincoln's later career contradict this statement?
6. Explain Mary Todd's statement, "In Abraham Lincoln I see a man who has split rails for other men's fences, but who will never build one around himself." What does Mary mean? Why has she formed this conclusion?
7. Billy Herndon and Mary Todd have a common goal. What is their goal? How do their motives differ?
8. Explain Lincoln's statement that he favors people like Elijah Lovejoy "because they could believe that their ideals are worth dying for." What does this statement imply about Lincoln, himself?
9. Why does Lincoln go to New Salem on his way back to Springfield? How is this visit related to his second proposal to Mary Todd?

## FILMSTRIP 3 – LINCOLN AND LIBERTY

*Parallels Chapters 9-16 in "The Prairie Years"*

*SYNOPSIS:*

Lincoln is nominated by the Republican party to run for the Senate from the state of Illinois. Slavery is fast becoming the most urgent issue confronting the nation. The Dred Scott Decision, the Free State Riots in Kansas, and the arrest of John Brown at Harper's Ferry mark the deepening crisis. When Lincoln campaigns against his opponent, Stephen Douglas, the issue of slavery dominates their debates. At the final debate each man sums up his beliefs while reporters record every word. Lincoln's "House Divided" speech is reprinted in newspapers across the country, making him a figure of national importance. Assuming that the country lawyer will be a malleable candidate and easy to control, the Republican leaders engineer Lincoln's nomination for the presidency. When Lincoln wins the election he leaves for Washington on a special train, bidding farewell to his friends and his past.

*BEFORE VIEWING:*

1. Carl Sandburg refers to the Lincoln-Douglas debates in the following passage from *Abraham Lincoln, The Prairie Years:* "Two men had spoken in Illinois to audiences surpassing any in past American history in size and in eagerness to hear. Yet they also spoke to the nation. The main points of the debate reached millions of readers. Newspapers in the larger cities printed the reports in full. A book of passion, an almanac of American visions, victories, defeats, a catechism of national thought and hope, were in the paragraphs of the debates." (Sandburg, p. 237)

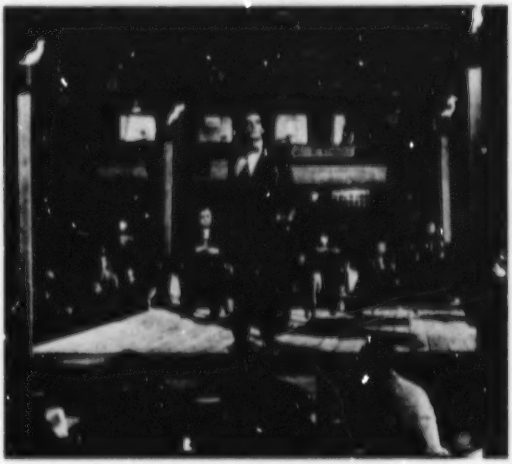
   How does this description of their debate for the Senate compare with political debates you have seen on television? What purposes did debates serve then? What purposes do such debates serve now?

2. Reference is made in filmstrip three to the Dred Scott Decision. What was this decision? What is its historical significance?

*VOCABULARY:*

popular sovereignty
artless
perennial
affliction
amiable
inviolate
unequivocally
allusion
demagogue
rebuttal
complacent
hypocrite
collation

## FILMSTRIP 3 – LINCOLN AND LIBERTY



*"A house divided against itself cannot stand."*

***EXPLORING THEMES:***

1. The opening frames of this filmstrip review a series of historical events in the years preceding the Civil War. What are the headlines? How do these historical events suggest the great forces dividing the nation?
2. How do the Dred Scott Decision and John Brown's Raid widen the rift between North and South?
3. What are Douglas's views on states' rights? How does he view America's role in the world? Is there any conflict in these two views? Explain.
4. Analyze the debating techniques of the two men. Review both their opening statements and the form of their rebuttals.
5. Why does Lincoln refer to the Declaration of Independence rather than the Constitution? Which one has the force of law? Which one does Douglas refer to? Why?
6. How have Lincoln's views on slavery changed? How has his attitude changed?
7. Why would the party leaders use the following words to describe Lincoln: infidel, radical demagogue, idealist, and rabble-rouser? Why does Crimmins think Lincoln is a "slick" politician? Is he correct? Explain.
8. Why does Crimmins think Lincoln can be elected? What is a compromise candidate? Is Lincoln such a candidate? Explain.
9. What is the significance of the reporters taking notes in shorthand at the debate? How do the debates further Lincoln's career? What role does Horace Greeley play when he decides to write a new editorial?
10. Summarize the main ideas of Lincoln's closing speech at the Springfield railroad station. What insights do these provide in determining the kind of president he would be?

## UNIT ACTIVITIES

### *I. FOR DISCUSSION*

A. How does this story of Lincoln's early life parallel the history of the United States between 1830 and 1860? Discuss how Lincoln moves reluctantly to meet his destiny throughout the course of his early life and career.

B. Do you think the party leaders behave cynically in choosing Lincoln to run for President in 1860? Why? Why do they want Lincoln as their candidate? What do they expect from him as a candidate and office holder? Do you think their view of Lincoln is accurate? Explain.

C. Mary Todd says that Lincoln "has no conception of his own power – or, if he has he's afraid to face it." Which explanation do you think is correct? Why?

D. Lincoln is a man of peace, but he leads the country into the bloodiest war in its history. Trace the series of events that lead to armed confrontation.

### *II. FOR CREATIVE AND EXPOSITORY WRITING*

A. Write a series of letters (dated chronologically from 1856 to 1861) from Mary Todd Lincoln to her family, in which she discusses the events of the time and her views on them.

B. Lincoln is quoted by Sandburg as saying, "Only events can make a president." Read Chapters 13 and 14 of Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln, The Prairie Years*, and in an essay discuss Lincoln's statement as it applies to his own presidency.

C. Lincoln's early years on the American frontier in Kentucky and Illinois reflect the hardships and privations of the lives of many early 19th century pioneers. Write an essay describing how Lincoln's experiences were representative of thousands of other frontier settlers. (See Chapters 1 and 2 in *The Prairie Years* for background information.)

### *III. FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION*

A. Summarize Abraham Lincoln's views on the issue of slavery as reflected in each of the following documents: the Lincoln-Douglas debates, the First Inaugural Address, and the Emancipation Proclamation.

B. In the Sherwood play, the Lincoln-Douglas debates are compressed into one. Research the actual debates. What were the major issues raised? What rhetorical techniques were used by each participant? Historically, who is considered to have "won" the debates? Explain.

C. Prepare a detailed outline of five major events which tore the nation apart in the period from 1850 to 1860. How may Lincoln's election to the presidency be considered one such event?

D. Research the story of either John Brown or Elijah Lovejoy. In an essay include the following information about the man whose life you choose to investigate: the major events in his life; why he became an important symbol in American history; how he approached the problem of slavery.

### *IV. COMPARING BOOK AND FILMSTRIP*

A. Read Sandburg's book, *Abraham Lincoln, The Prairie Years*, and compare the picture of Mary Todd Lincoln in the book with her role in the filmstrip. How do they differ? How are they alike? Which gives a more complete picture of her character? How do you explain the differences?

B. Read Chapters 10, 11, 13, and 14 of *The Prairie Years* and report to the class about the events leading to Lincoln's nomination as a presidential candidate. Compare these chapters with the same time period in the filmstrip.

C. We hear only the rebuttal of one debate in the filmstrip. Read chapter 11 of *Abraham Lincoln, The Prairie Years* which includes Sandburg's summary of

the great debates. How well does Sherwood succeed in compressing the debates into the two speeches given by Lincoln and Douglas in filmstrip 3? Explain in a carefully organized essay.

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# FILMS INTO FILMSTRIPS

*OUTSTANDING MOTION PICTURES AS SOUND FILMSTRIP PROGRAMS*

| | |
|---|---|
| HAMLET | OF MICE AND MEN |
| THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER | WUTHERING HEIGHTS |
| ALICE IN WONDERLAND | WHERE THE RED FERN GROWS |
| AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE | THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER |
| THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES | TOM SAWYER/HUCKLEBERRY FINN |
| THE LORD OF THE RINGS | CRIME AND PUNISHMENT |
| THE BLACK STALLION | THE CALL OF THE WILD/THE SEA WOLF |
| WATERSHIP DOWN | LOUIS L'AMOUR'S AMERICAN WEST |
| A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM | THE RED PONY |
| SEVEN ALONE | EMIGRANTS/THE NEW LAND |
| BORN FREE | CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY |
| JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG | OTHELLO |
| BIG MO | THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU |
| ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN | MACBETH |
| THE PEARL | THE MIRACLE WORKER |
| ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS | MOBY DICK |
| PRIDE AND PREJUDICE | KIDNAPPED |
| PATHS OF GLORY | MARTIN LUTHER KING |
| ANIMAL FARM | LORD OF THE FLIES |
| THE GREAT BRAIN | TRADE OFFS—ECONOMIC EDUCATION |
| INHERIT THE WIND | THE TAMING OF THE SHREW |

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